

1. *The State of Efficiency of the Masterton Fire Brigade and Fire Police.*

As a body, the *personnel* of your brigade can hardly be improved. They appear to be an active, intelligent body of men, of athletic build and good stamina, who seem to take considerable interest in their work; but they are badly in need of instruction and drill in the primary steps of fire-brigade work, most particularly in the important matter of life saving and preservation, which hitherto has been entirely neglected. The foregoing remarks will apply to the Fire Police also.

2. *The Sufficiency of—A. The Fire-fighting Equipment.*

When the fire-engine has been put in good order, and the 500 ft. of new hose provided for in your estimates has been obtained, you will have a fairly efficient plant, with the exception that a couple of hand-pumps, with stirrups, "London Fire Brigade" pattern, should be obtained.

*B. The High-pressure Water-supply.*

This is a very weak point in the fire-protection of your district. The average pressure—55 lb.—is too low to be of good service at a fire of any magnitude; therefore the necessity of having the fire-engine put in good order as soon as possible, and reserving it for use for fire purposes only. The reticulation is bad, on account of the large number of 3 in. mains at present laid down; nothing less than 4 in. mains should ever be laid for fire purposes.

3. *The Installation of a System of Electric Fire-alarms.*

Street fire-alarms are a very necessary part of fire-protection equipment; indeed, indispensable for towns of any size. The best and most reliable system at present known is the "Gamewell." Unfortunately it is very costly, but a reliable and economical system is a modification of the "Gamewell" similar to that in use in Wellington for the last seven years, copied from Melbourne, where it has been installed for many years with excellent results. Mr. Kirkby, the original adaptor, but who now has his workshops at 120 Bathurst Street, Sydney, has very considerably improved the system lately, and an estimate of the cost of the installation you may require can be obtained from him. Should your Board decide to proceed with the installation at once, it must be borne in mind that to obtain the benefit of the system it will require the continual presence of some person at the fire-station, so that the general alarm may be given immediately the street-box is operated upon; further, the street-alarm points should be so fixed that they will be in suitable positions in relation to the new station when it is erected.

4. *The Provision of a New Site for a Fire-brigade Station.*

This question was pretty fully discussed between certain members of your Board and myself upon the occasion of my visit to Masterton some few days ago. For the reasons given at that time, both as to position in relation to the risks of your town, particularly if the proposed street is put through, and from an economical point of view, I consider the Essex Street site the most suitable for a central station.

5. *The Question of Providing a Motor in place of Horses.*

This matter also was discussed at the time of my visit to Masterton. Seeing that your estimate for the year is very high, and that it would, if carried out under present conditions—that is, to provide the capital cost of the motor in one year—make your next year's estimate also very high, I would advise that this matter should be left in abeyance for the present, particularly in view of the fact that consideration has been promised of an amendment to the Act giving the Fire Boards power to borrow money, thus enabling certain capital expenditure to be extended over a number of years.

I have, &c.,

THOMAS T. HUGO,

The Secretary of the Masterton Fire Board.

Inspector of Fire Brigades.

SIR,—

Office of Inspector of Fire Brigades, Wellington, 19th February, 1909.

I have the honour to forward, for the information of your Board, a report in connection with my recent visit of inspection, and dealing with the general efficiency of your brigade.

At 9.5 p.m. on Thursday, the 28th January, I caused the fire-bell at the Central Station to be rung, and directed the brigade to get to work with one delivery at a point in Chapel Street about 330 yards distant from the station. Water was shown full on at 9.10.25 p.m. At 9.15 p.m. the brigade was mustered, when it was found that the Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent, and fifteen firemen were present. The captain and eleven men of the Fire Police Corps were also in attendance. At the inspection on the following evening at 8 p.m. the muster was as follows: Fire Brigade—Superintendent, Deputy, sixteen men, and three on leave; twenty-one accounted for. Fire Police—Captain, fifteen men, two on leave, one sick; nineteen accounted for.

The time from the first toll of the bell at 9.5 p.m. until water was shown—5 minutes 25 seconds—was longer than it should have been, but, as there was some little misunderstanding as to what was actually required, no doubt it will be improved upon next time.

The plant turned out was ample for the supposed purpose. The fire-engine was horsed and turned out very smartly, and arrived on the scene of the supposed fire in quick time.